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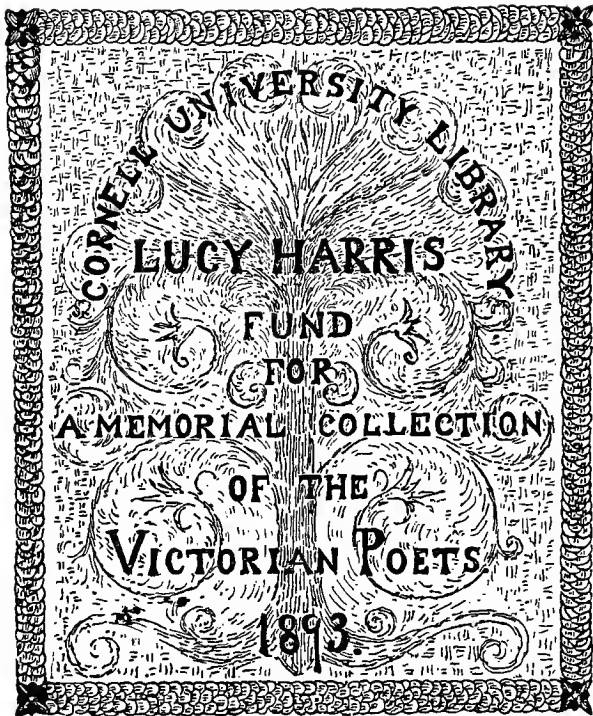


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RESPONSIBILITIES

AND OTHER POEMS



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

RESPONSIBILITIES

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1917

A459816 (1917)

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Printed 1916

Reprinted 1917

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RESPONSIBILITIES

'In dreams begins responsibility.'
Old Play.

*'How am I fallen from myself, for a
long time now
I have not seen the Prince of Chang in
my dreams.'*
Khoung-fou-tseu.

*PARDON, old fathers, if you still remain
Somewhere in ear-shot for the story's
end,
Old Dublin merchant 'free of ten and
four'
Or trading out of Galway into Spain ;
And country scholar, Robert Emmet's
friend,
A hundred-year-old memory to the poor ;
Traders or soldiers who have left me
blood
That has not passed through any
huxter's loin,
Pardon, and you that did not weigh
the cost,
Old Butlers when you took to horse and
stood
Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne
Till your bad master blenched and all
was lost ;*



*PARDON, old fathers, if you still remain
Somewhere in ear-shot for the story's
end,
Old Dublin merchant 'free of ten and
four'
Or trading out of Galway into Spain ;
And country scholar, Robert Emmet's
friend,
A hundred-year-old memory to the poor ;
Traders or soldiers who have left me
blood
That has not passed through any
huater's loin,
Pardon, and you that did not weigh
the cost,
Old Butlers when you took to horse and
stood
Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne
Till your bad master blenched and all
was lost ;*

*You merchant skipper that leaped over-
board
After a ragged hat in Biscay Bay,
You most of all, silent and fierce old
man
Because you were the spectacle that
stirred
My fancy, and set my boyish lips to say
' Only the wasteful virtues earn the
sun ' ;
Pardon that for a barren passion's sake,
Although I have come close on forty-
nine
I have no child, I have nothing but a
book,
Nothing but that to prove your blood
and mine.*

January 1914.

THE GREY ROCK

*Poets with whom I learned my trade,
Companions of the Cheshire Cheese,
Here's an old story I've re-made,
Imagining 'twould better please
Your ears than stories now in fashion,
Though you may think I waste my
breath*

*Pretending that there can be passion
That has more life in it than death,
And though at bottling of your wine
The bow-legged Goban had no say ;
The moral's yours because it's mine.*

When cups went round at close of
day—

Is not that how good stories run ?—
Somewhere within some hollow hill,

If books speak truth in Slievenamon,
But let that be, the gods were still
And sleepy, having had their meal,
And smoky torches made a glare
On painted pillars, on a deal
Of fiddles and of flutes hung there
By the ancient holy hands that brought
 them

From murmuring Murias, on cups—
Old Goban hammered them and
 wrought them,

And put his pattern round their tops
To hold the wine they buy of him.
But from the juice that made them
 wise

All those had lifted up the dim
Imaginations of their eyes,
For one that was like woman made
Before their sleepy eyelids ran
And trembling with her passion said,
' Come out and dig for a dead man,
Who's burrowing somewhere in the
 ground,

And mock him to his face and then
Hollo him on with horse and hound,
For he is the worst of all dead men.'

*We should be dazed and terror struck,
If we but saw in dreams that room,
Those wine-drenched eyes, and curse our
luck*

*That emptied all our days to come.
I knew a woman none could please,
Because she dreamed when but a child
Of men and women made like these ;
And after, when her blood ran wild,
Had ravelled her own story out,
And said, ' In two or in three years
I need must marry some poor lout,'
And having said it burst in tears.
Since, tavern comrades, you have died,
Maybe your images have stood,
Mere bone and muscle thrown aside,
Before that roomful or as good.
You had to face your ends when young—
'Twas wine or women, or some curse—*

*But never made a poorer song
That you might have a heavier purse,
Nor gave loud service to a cause
That you might have a troop of friends.
You kept the Muses' sterner laws,
And unrepenting faced your ends,
And therefore earned the right—and yet
Dowson and Johnson most I praise—
To troop with those the world's forgot,
And copy their proud steady gaze.*

'The Danish troop was driven out
Between the dawn and dusk,' she
said ;

'Although the event was long in
doubt,

Although the King of Ireland's dead
And half the kings, before sundown
All was accomplished.'

'When this day
Murrough, the King of Ireland's son,
Foot after foot was giving way,

He and his best troops back to back
Had perished there, but the Danes ran,
Stricken with panic from the attack,
The shouting of an unseen man ;
And being thankful Murrough found,
Led by a footsole dipped in blood
That had made prints upon the ground,
Where by old thorn trees that man
stood ;

And though when he gazed here and
there,

He had but gazed on thorn trees,
spoke,

“ Who is the friend that seems but air
And yet could give so fine a stroke ? ”
Thereon a young man met his eye,
Who said, “ Because she held me in
Her love, and would not have me die,
Rock-nurtured Aoife took a pin,
And pushing it into my shirt,
Promised that for a pin’s sake,
No man should see to do me hurt ;
But there it’s gone ; I will not take

The fortune that had been my shame
Seeing, King's son, what wounds you
have."

'Twas roundly spoke, but when night
came

He had betrayed me to his grave,
For he and the King's son were dead.
I'd promised him two hundred years,
And when for all I'd done or said—
And these immortal eyes shed tears—
He claimed his country's need was
most,

I'd saved his life, yet for the sake
Of a new friend he has turned a ghost.
What does he care if my heart break?
I call for spade and horse and hound
That we may harry him.' Thereon
She cast herself upon the ground
And rent her clothes and made her
moan :

'Why are they faithless when their
might

Is from the holy shades that rove

The grey rock and the windy light ?
Why should the faithfullest heart
most love

The bitter sweetness of false faces ?
Why must the lasting love what
passes,
Why are the gods by men betrayed ! ’

But thereon every god stood up
With a slow smile and without sound,
And stretching forth his arm and cup
To where she moaned upon the
ground,
Suddenly drenched her to the skin ;
And she with Goban’s wine adrip,
No more remembering what had been,
Stared at the gods with laughing lip.

*I have kept my faith, though faith was
tried,
To that rock-born, rock-wandering foot,
And the world’s altered since you died,
And I am in no good repute*

*With the loud host before the sea,
That think sword strokes were better
 meant
Than lover's music—let that be,
So that the wandering foot's content.*

THE TWO KINGS

KING EOCHAID came at sundown to a
wood
Westward of Tara. Hurrying to his
queen
He had out-ridden his war-wasted men
That with empounded cattle trod the
mire ;
And where beech trees had mixed a
pale green light
With the ground-ivy's blue, he saw a
stag
Whiter than curds, its eyes the tint
of the sea.
Because it stood upon his path and
seemed
More hands in height than any stag
in the world

He sat with tightened rein and loosened
mouth

Upon his trembling horse, then drove
the spur ;

But the stag stooped and ran at him,
and passed,

Rending the horse's flank. King
Eochaid reeled

Then drew his sword to hold its
levelled point

Against the stag. When horn and
steel were met

The horn resounded as though it had
been silver,

A sweet, miraculous, terrifying sound.
Horn locked in sword, they tugged
and struggled there

As though a stag and unicorn were
met

In Africa on Mountain of the Moon,
Until at last the double horns, drawn
backward,

Butted below the single and so pierced

The entrails of the horse. Dropping
his sword
King Eochaid seized the horns in his
strong hands
And stared into the sea-green eye, and
so
Hither and thither to and fro they trod
Till all the place was beaten into mire.
The strong thigh and the agile thigh
were met,
The hands that gathered up the might
of the world,
And hoof and horn that had sucked in
their speed
Amid the elaborate wilderness of the air.
Through bush they plunged and over
ivied root,
And where the stone struck fire, while
in the leaves
A squirrel whinnied and a bird
screamed out ;
But when at last he forced those
sinewy flanks

Against a beech bole, he threw down
the beast

And knelt above it with drawn knife.

On the instant

It vanished like a shadow, and a cry

So mournful that it seemed the cry of
one

Who had lost some unimaginable
treasure

Wandered between the blue and the
green leaf

And climbed into the air, crumbling
away,

Till all had seemed a shadow or a vision

But for the trodden mire, the pool of
blood,

The disembowelled horse.

King Eochaid ran,

Toward peopled Tara, nor stood to
draw his breath

Until he came before the painted wall,
The posts of polished yew, circled
with bronze,

Of the great door ; but though the
 hanging lamps
Showed their faint light through the
 unshuttered windows,
Nor door, nor mouth, nor slipper made
 a noise,
Nor on the ancient beaten paths, that
 wound
From well-side or from plough-land,
 was there noise ;
And there had been no sound of
 living thing
Before him or behind, but that far-off
On the horizon edge bellowed the herds.
Knowing that silence brings no good
 to kings,
And mocks returning victory, he
 passed
Between the pillars with a beating
 heart
And saw where in the midst of the
 great hall
Pale-faced, alone upon a bench, Edain

Sat upright with a sword before her
feet.

Her hands on either side had gripped
the bench,

Her eyes were cold and steady, her
lips tight.

Some passion had made her stone.
Hearing a foot

She started and then knew whose
foot it was ;

But when he thought to take her in
his arms

She motioned him afar, and rose and
spoke :

‘ I have sent among the fields or to
the woods

The fighting men and servants of this
house,

For I would have your judgment
upon one

Who is self-accused. If she be innocent
She would not look in any known
man’s face

Till judgment has been given, and if
 guilty,
 Will never look again on known man's
 face.'
 And at these words he paled, as she
 had paled,
 Knowing that he should find upon
 her lips
 The meaning of that monstrous
 day.

Then she :
 ' You brought me where your brother
 Ardan sat
 Always in his one seat, and bid me
 care him
 Through that strange illness that had
 fixed him there,
 And should he die to heap his burial
 mound
 And carve his name in Ogham.'
 Eochaid said,
 ' He lives ? ' ' He lives and is a healthy
 man.'

‘While I have him and you it matters
little

What man you have lost, what evil
you have found.’

‘I bid them make his bed under this roof
And carried him his food with my
own hands,

And so the weeks passed by. But
when I said

“What is this trouble?” he would
answer nothing,

Though always at my words his trouble
grew ;

And I but asked the more, till he cried
out,

Weary of many questions : “There
are things

That make the heart akin to the dumb
stone.”

Then I replied : “Although you hide
a secret,

Hopeless and dear, or terrible to think
on,

Speak it, that I may send through the
wide world

For medicine." Thereon he cried aloud :

"Day after day you question me, and I,

Because there is such a storm amid

my thoughts

I shall be carried in the gust, command,

Forbid, beseech and waste my breath."

Then I,

"Although the thing that you have

hid were evil,

The speaking of it could be no great

wrong,

And evil must it be, if done 'twere

worse

Than mound and stone that keep all

virtue in,

And loosen on us dreams that waste

our life,

Shadows and shows that can but turn

the brain."

But finding him still silent I stooped

down

And whispering that none but he
 should hear,
Said: "If a woman has put this on you,
My men, whether it please her or
 displease,
And though they have to cross the
 Loughlan waters
And take her in the middle of armed
 men,
Shall make her look upon her handi-
 work,
That she may quench the rick she has
 fired; and though
She may have worn silk clothes, or
 worn a crown,
She'll not be proud, knowing within
 her heart
That our sufficient portion of the world
Is that we give, although it be brief
 giving,
Happiness to children and to men."
Then he, driven by his thought beyond
 his thought,

And speaking what he would not
though he would,

Sighed : " You, even you yourself,
could work the cure ! "

And at those words I rose and I went
out

And for nine days he had food from
other hands,

And for nine days my mind went
whirling round

The one disastrous zodiac, muttering
That the immedicable mound's beyond
Our questioning, beyond our pity even.
But when nine days had gone I stood
again

Before his chair and bending down
my head

Told him, that when Orion rose, and
all

The women of his household were
asleep,

To go—for hope would give his limbs
the power—

To an old empty woodman's house
that's hidden

Close to a clump of beech trees in the
wood

Westward of Tara, there to await a
friend

That could, as he had told her, work
his cure

And would be no harsh friend.

When night had deepened,
I groped my way through boughs,
and over roots,

Till oak and hazel ceased and beech
began,

And found the house, a sputtering
torch within,

And stretched out sleeping on a pile
of skins

Ardan, and though I called to him
and tried

To shake him out of sleep, I could not
rouse him.

I waited till the night was on the turn,

Then fearing that some labourer, on
his way
To plough or pasture-land, might see
me there,
Went out.

Among the ivy-covered rocks,
As on the blue light of a sword, a man
Who had unnatural majesty, and eyes
Like the eyes of some great kite
scouring the woods,
Stood on my path. Trembling from
head to foot
I gazed at him like grouse upon a kite ;
But with a voice that had unnatural
music,
“ A weary wooing and a long,” he said,
“ Speaking of love through other lips
and looking
Under the eyelids of another, for it
was my craft
That put a passion in the sleeper there,
And when I had got my will and
drawn you here,

Where I may speak to you alone, my
craft

Sucked up the passion out of him
again

And left mere sleep. He'll wake when
the sun wakes,

Push out his vigorous limbs and rub
his eyes,

And wonder what has ailed him these
twelve months."

I cowered back upon the wall in terror,
But that sweet-sounding voice ran on :

“ Woman,

I was your husband when you rode
the air,

Danced in the whirling foam and in
the dust,

In days you have not kept in memory,
Being betrayed into a cradle, and I
come

That I may claim you as my wife
again."

I was no longer terrified, his voice

Had half awakened some old memory,
Yet answered him : " I am King
 Eochaid's wife
And with him have found every
 happiness
Women can find." With a most
 masterful voice,
That made the body seem as it were
 a string
Under a bow, he cried : " What
 happiness
Can lovers have that know their
 happiness
Must end at the dumb stone ? But
 where we build
Our sudden palaces in the still air
Pleasure itself can bring no weariness,
Nor can time waste the cheek, nor is
 there foot
That has grown weary of the whirling
 dance,
Nor an unlaughing mouth, but mine
 that mourns,

Among those mouths that sing their
sweathearts' praise,
Your empty bed." "How should I
love," I answered,
"Were it not that when the dawn
has lit my bed
And shown my husband sleeping there,
I have sighed,
'Your strength and nobleness will
pass away.'
Or how should love be worth its pains
were it not
That when he has fallen asleep within
my arms,
Being wearied out, I love in man the
child ?
What can they know of love that do
not know
She builds her nest upon a narrow
ledge
Above a windy precipice ?" Then he :
"Seeing that when you come to the
death-bed

You must return, whether you would
or no,

This human life blotted from memory,
Why must I live some thirty, forty
years,

Alone with all this useless happiness ? ”
Thereon he seized me in his arms,
but I

Thrust him away with both my hands
and cried,

“ Never will I believe there is any
change

Can blot out of my memory this
life

Sweetened by death, but if I could
believe

That were a double hunger in my lips
For what is doubly brief.”

And now the shape,
My hands were pressed to, vanished
suddenly.

I staggered, but a beech tree stayed
my fall,

And clinging to it I could hear the
cocks

Crow upon Tara.'

King Eochaid bowed his head
And thanked her for her kindness to
his brother,
For that she promised, and for that
refused.

Thereon the bellowing of the em-
pounded herds
Rose round the walls, and through the
bronze-ringed door
Jostled and shouted those war-wasted
men,
And in the midst King Eochaid's
brother stood.
He'd heard that din on the horizon's
edge
And ridden towards it, being ignorant.

TO A WEALTHY MAN WHO PROMISED
A SECOND SUBSCRIPTION TO THE
DUBLIN MUNICIPAL GALLERY IF
IT WERE PROVED THE PEOPLE
WANTED PICTURES.

You gave but will not give again
Until enough of Paudeen's pence
By Biddy's halfpennies have lain
To be 'some sort of evidence,'
Before you'll put your guineas down,
That things it were a pride to give
Are what the blind and ignorant town
Imagines best to make it thrive.
What cared Duke Ercole, that bid
His mummers to the market place,
What th' onion-sellers thought or did
So that his Plautus set the pace
For the Italian comedies ?
And Guidobaldo, when he made

30 TO A WEALTHY MAN

That grammar school of courtesies
Where wit and beauty learned their
trade

Upon Urbino's windy hill,
Had sent no runners to and fro
That he might learn the shepherds'
will.

And when they drove out Cosimo,
Indifferent how the rancour ran,
He gave the hours they had set free
To Michelozzo's latest plan
For the San Marco Library,
Whence turbulent Italy should draw
Delight in Art whose end is peace,
In logic and in natural law
By sucking at the dugs of Greece.

Your open hand but shows our loss,
For he knew better how to live.
Let Paudeens play at pitch and
toss,

Look up in the sun's eye and give
What the exultant heart calls good

TO A WEALTHY MAN 31

That some new day may breed the
best

Because you gave, not what they
would

But the right twigs for an eagle's nest !

December 1912.

SEPTEMBER 1913

WHAT need you, being come to sense,
But fumble in a greasy till
And add the halfpence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the
bone ;

For men were born to pray and save :
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind
The names that stilled your childish
play,
They have gone about the world like
wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman's rope was
spun,

And what, God help us, could they
save :

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide ;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave ;
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were,
In all their loneliness and pain
You'd cry ' Some woman's yellow hair
Has maddened every mother's son ' :
They weighed so lightly what they
gave,
But let them be, they're dead and gone,
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

TO A FRIEND WHOSE WORK
HAS COME TO NOTHING

Now all the truth is out,
Be secret and take defeat
From any brazen throat,
For how can you compete,
Being honour bred, with one
Who, were it proved he lies,
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbours' eyes ?
Bred to a harder thing
Than Triumph, turn away
And like a laughing string
Whereon mad fingers play
Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

PAUDEEN

INDIGNANT at the fumbling wits, the
obscure spite
Of our old Paudeen in his shop, I
stumbled blind
Among the stones and thorn trees,
under morning light ;
Until a curlew cried and in the
luminous wind
A curlew answered ; and suddenly
thereupon I thought
That on the lonely height where all
are in God's eye,
There cannot be, confusion of our
sound forgot,
A single soul that lacks a sweet
crystalline cry.

TO A SHADE

IF you have revisited the town, thin
Shade,

Whether to look upon your monument
(I wonder if the builder has been paid)
Or happier thoughted when the day
is spent'

To drink of that salt breath out of
the sea

When grey gulls flit about instead of
men,

And the gaunt houses put on majesty :
Let these content you and be gone
again ;

For they are at their old tricks yet.

A man
Of your own passionate serving kind
who had brought

In his full hands what, had they only
known,
Had given their children's children
loftier thought,
Sweeter emotion, working in their
veins
Like gentle blood, has been driven
from the place,
And insult heaped upon him for his
pains
And for his open-handedness, dis-
grace;
An old foul mouth that slandered
you had set
The pack upon him.

Go unquiet wanderer
And gather the Glasnevin coverlet
About your head till the dust stops
your ear,
The time for you to taste of that salt
breath
And listen at the corners has not
come ;

You had enough of sorrow before
death—

Away, away! You are safer in the
tomb.

September 29th, 1913.

WHEN HELEN LIVED

WE have cried in our despair
That men desert,
For some trivial affair
Or noisy, insolent, sport,
Beauty that we have won
From bitterest hours ;
Yet we, had we walked within
Those topless towers
Where Helen walked with her boy,
Had given but as the rest
Of the men and women of Troy,
A word and a jest.

ON THOSE THAT HATED 'THE PLAY-
BOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD,'
1907

ONCE, when midnight smote the air,
Eunuchs ran through Hell and met
From thoroughfare to thoroughfare,
While that great Juan galloped by ;
And like these to rail and sweat
Staring upon his sinewy thigh.

THE THREE BEGGARS

*' THOUGH to my feathers in the wet,
I have stood here from break of day,
I have not found a thing to eat
For only rubbish comes my way.
Am I to live on lebeen-lone ?'
Muttered the old crane of Gort.
' For all my pains on lebeen-lone.'*

King Guari walked amid his court
The palace-yard and river-side
And there to three old beggars said :
' You that have wandered far and
wide
Can ravel out what's in my head.
Do men who least desire get most,
Or get the most who most desire ?'
A beggar said : ' They get the most

42 THE THREE BEGGARS

Whom man or devil cannot tire,
And what could make their muscles
taut

Unless desire had made them so.’
But Guari laughed with secret thought,
‘ If that be true as it seems true,
One of you three is a rich man,
For he shall have a thousand pounds
Who is first asleep, if but he can
Sleep before the third noon sounds.’
And thereon merry as a bird,
With his old thoughts King Guari
went

From river-side and palace-yard
And left them to their argument.
‘ And if I win,’ one beggar said,
‘ Though I am old I shall persuade
A pretty girl to share my bed ’;
The second : ‘ I shall learn a trade ’;
The third : ‘ I’ll hurry to the course
Among the other gentlemen,
And lay it all upon a horse ’;
The second : ‘ I have thought again :

A farmer has more dignity.'
 One to another sighed and cried :
 The exorbitant dreams of beggary,
 That idleness had borne to pride,
 Sang through their teeth from noon
 to noon ;

And when the second twilight brought
 The frenzy of the beggars' moon
 They closed their blood-shot eyes for
 naught.

One beggar cried : ' You're shamming
 sleep,'

And thereupon their anger grew
 Till they were whirling in a heap.

They'd mauled and bitten the night
 through

Or sat upon their heels to rail,
 And when old Guari came and stood
 Before the three to end this tale,
 They were commingling lice and blood.
 ' Time's up,' he cried, and all the
 three

44 THE THREE BEGGARS

With blood-shot eyes upon him stared.
'Time's up,' he cried, and all the
three
Fell down upon the dust and snored.

*'Maybe I shall be lucky yet,
Now they are silent,' said the crane.
'Though to my feathers in the wet
I've stood as I were made of stone
And seen the rubbish run about,
It's certain there are trout somewhere
And maybe I shall take a trout
If but I do not seem to care.'*

THE THREE HERMITS

THREE old hermits took the air
By a cold and desolate sea,
First was muttering a prayer,
Second rummaged for a flea ;
On a windy stone, the third,
Giddy with his hundredth year,
Sang unnoticed like a bird.
' Though the Door of Death is near
And what waits behind the door,
Three times in a single day
I, though upright on the shore,
Fall asleep when I should pray.'
So the first but now the second,
' We're but given what we have
 earned
When all thoughts and deeds are
 reckoned

46 THE THREE HERMITS

So it's plain to be discerned
That the shades of holy men,
Who have failed being weak of will,
Pass the Door of Birth again,
And are plagued by crowds, until
They've the passion to escape.'
Moaned the other, 'They are thrown
Into some most fearful shape.'
But the second mocked his moan :
'They are not changed to anything,
Having loved God once, but maybe,
To a poet or a king
Or a witty lovely lady.'
While he'd rummaged rags and hair,
Caught and cracked his flea, the third,
Giddy with his hundredth year
Sang unnoticed like a bird.

BEGGAR TO BEGGAR CRIED

‘TIME to put off the world and go
somewhere

And find my health again in the sea
air,’

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-
struck,

‘And make my soul before my pate
is bare.’

‘And get a comfortable wife and house
To rid me of the devil in my shoes,’

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-
struck,

‘And the worse devil that is between
my thighs.’

‘And though I’d marry with a comely
lass,

48 BEGGAR TO BEGGAR CRIED

She need not be too comely—let it
pass,’

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-
struck,

‘ But there’s a devil in a looking-
glass.’

‘ Nor should she be too rich, because
the rich

Are driven by wealth as beggars by
the itch,’

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-
struck,

‘ And cannot have a humorous happy
speech.’

‘ And there I’ll grow respected at my
ease,

And hear amid the garden’s nightly
peace,’

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-
struck,

‘ The wind-blown clamour of the
barnacle-geese.’

THE WELL AND THE TREE

‘ THE Man that I praise,’
Cries out the empty well,
‘ Lives all his days
Where a hand on the bell
Can call the milch-cows
To the comfortable door of his house.
Who but an idiot would praise
Dry stones in a well ? ’

‘ The Man that I praise,’
Cries out the leafless tree,
‘ Has married and stays
By an old hearth, and he
On naught has set store
But children and dogs on the floor.
Who but an idiot would praise
A withered tree ? ’

RUNNING TO PARADISE

As I came over Windy Gap
They threw a halfpenny into my cap,
For I am running to Paradise ;
And all that I need do is to wish
And somebody puts his hand in the
dish
To throw me a bit of salted fish :
And there the king *is* but as the
beggar.

My brother Mourteen is worn out
With skelping his big brawling lout,
And I am running to Paradise ;
A poor life do what he can,
And though he keep a dog and a gun,
A serving maid and a serving man :
And there the king *is* but as the
beggar.

Poor men have grown to be rich men,
 And rich men grown to be poor again,
 And I am running to Paradise ;
 And many a darling wit's grown dull
 That tossed a bare heel when at school,
 Now it has filled an old sock full :
 And there the king *is* but as the
 beggar.

The wind is old and still at play
 While I must hurry upon my way,
 For I am running to Paradise ;
 Yet never have I lit on a friend
 To take my fancy like the wind
 That nobody can buy or bind :
 And there the king *is* but as the
 beggar.

THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

A ONE-LEGGED, one-armed, one-eyed
man,

A bundle of rags upon a crutch,
Stumbled on windy Cruachan
Cursing the wind. It was as much
As the one sturdy leg could do
To keep him upright while he cursed.
He had counted, where long years ago
Queen Maeve's nine Maines had been
nursed,

A pair of lapwings, one old sheep
And not a house to the plain's edge,
When close to his right hand a heap
Of grey stones and a rocky ledge
Reminded him that he could make,
If he but shifted a few stones,
A shelter till the daylight broke.

But while he fumbled with the stones
They toppled over ; ‘ Were it not
I have a lucky wooden shin
I had been hurt ’ ; and toppling
brought
Before his eyes, where stones had
been,
A dark deep hole in the rock’s face.
He gave a gasp and thought to
run,
Being certain it was no right place
But the Hell Mouth at Cruachan
That’s stuffed with all that’s old and
bad,
And yet stood still, because inside
He had seen a red-haired jolly lad
In some outlandish coat beside
A ladle and a tub of beer,
Plainly no phantom by his look.
So with a laugh at his own fear
He crawled into that pleasant nook.
Young Red-head stretched himself to
yawn

54 THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

And murmured, 'May God curse the
night

That's grown uneasy near the dawn
So that it seems even I sleep light ;
And who are you that wakens me ?
Has one of Maeve's nine brawling sons
Grown tired of his own company ?
But let him keep his grave for once
I have to find the sleep I have lost.'
And then at last being wide awake,
' I took you for a brawling ghost,
Say what you please, but from day-
break

I'll sleep another century.'
The beggar deaf to all but hope
Went down upon a hand and knee
And took the wooden ladle up
And would have dipped it in the beer
But the other pushed his hand aside,
' Before you have dipped it in the beer
That sacred Goban brewed,' he cried,
' I'd have assurance that you are able
To value beer—I will have no fool

Dipping his nose into my ladle
Because he has stumbled on this hole
In the bad hour before the dawn.
If you but drink that beer and say
I will sleep until the winter's gone,
Or maybe, to Midsummer Day
You will sleep that length ; and at the
first

I waited so for that or this—
Because the weather was a-cursed
Or I had no woman there to kiss,
And slept for half a year or so ;
But year by year I found that less
Gave me such pleasure I'd forgo
Even a half hour's nothingness,
And when at one year's end I found
I had not waked a single minute,
I chose this burrow under ground.
I will sleep away all Time within it :
My sleep were now nine centuries
But for those mornings when I find
The lapwing at their foolish cries
And the sheep bleating at the wind

56 THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

As when I also played the fool.'
The beggar in a rage began
Upon his hunkers in the hole,
' It's plain that you are no right man
To mock at everything I love
As if it were not worth the doing.
I'd have a merry life enough
If a good Easter wind were blowing,
And though the winter wind is bad
I should not be too down in the mouth
For anything you did or said
If but this wind were in the south.'
But the other cried, ' You long for
 spring
Or that the wind would shift a point
And do not know that you would
 bring,
If time were suppler in the joint,
Neither the spring nor the south wind
But the hour when you shall pass
 away
And leave no smoking wick behind,
For all life longs for the Last Day

And there's no man but cocks his ear
To know when Michael's trumpet
cries

That flesh and bone may disappear,
And souls as if they were but sighs,
And there be nothing but God left ;
But I alone being blessed keep
Like some old rabbit to my cleft
And wait Him in a drunken sleep.'

He dipped his ladle in the tub
And drank and yawned and stretched
him out.

The other shouted, ' You would rob
My life of every pleasant thought
And every comfortable thing
And so take that and that.' Thereon
He gave him a great pummelling,
But might have pummelled at a stone
For all the sleeper knew or cared ;
And after heaped the stones again
And cursed and prayed, and prayed
and cursed :

58 THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

‘ Oh God if he got loose ! ’ And then
In fury and in panic fled
From the Hell Mouth at Cruachan
And gave God thanks that overhead
The clouds were brightening with the
dawn.

THE PLAYER QUEEN

(Song from an Unfinished Play)

My mother dandled me and sang,
'How young it is, how young!'
And made a golden cradle
That on a willow swung.

'He went away,' my mother sang,
'When I was brought to bed,'
And all the while her needle pulled
The gold and silver thread.

She pulled the thread and bit the
thread
And made a golden gown,
And wept because she had dreamt that I
Was born to wear a crown.

'When she was got,' my mother sang,
'I heard a sea-mew cry,
And saw a flake of the yellow foam
That dropped upon my thigh.'

How therefore could she help but
 braid
The gold into my hair,
And dream that I should carry
The golden top of care ?

THE REALISTS

HOPE that you may understand !
What can books of men that wive
In a dragon-guarded land,
Paintings of the dolphin-drawn
Sea-nymphs in their pearly waggons
Do, but awake a hope to live
That had gone
With the dragons ?

I

THE WITCH

ToIL and grow rich,
What's that but to lie
With a foul witch
And after, drained dry, *oh!*
To be brought
To the chamber where
Lies one long sought
With despair.

II

THE PEACOCK

WHAT'S riches to him
That has made a great peacock
With the pride of his eye ?
The wind-beaten, stone-grey,
And desolate Three-rock
Would nourish his whim.
Live he or die
Amid wet rocks and heather,
His ghost will be gay
Adding feather to feather
For the pride of his eye.

THE MOUNTAIN TOMB

POUR wine and dance if Manhood still
 have pride,
Bring roses if the rose be yet in
 bloom ;
The cataract smokes upon the moun-
 tain side,
Our Father Rosicross is in his tomb.

Pull down the blinds, bring fiddle and
 clarionet
That there be no foot silent in the
 room
Nor mouth from kissing, nor from
 wine unwet ;
Our Father Rosicross is in his tomb.

THE MOUNTAIN TOMB 65

In vain, in vain ; the cataract still
cries

The everlasting taper lights the gloom ;
All wisdom shut into his onyx eyes
Our Father Rosicross sleeps in his
tomb.

I

TO A CHILD DANCING IN THE WIND

DANCE there upon the shore ;
What need have you to care
For wind or water's roar ?
And tumble out your hair
That the salt drops have wet ;
Being young you have not known
The fool's triumph, nor yet
Love lost as soon as won,
Nor the best labourer dead
And all the sheaves to bind.
What need have you to dread
The monstrous crying of wind ?

II

TWO YEARS LATER

HAS no one said those daring
Kind eyes should be more learn'd ?
Or warned you how despairing
The moths are when they are burned,
I could have warned you, but you are
 young,
So we speak a different tongue.

O you will take whatever's offered
And dream that all the world's a
 friend,
Suffer as your mother suffered,
Be as broken in the end.
But I am old and you are young,
And I speak a barbarous tongue.

A MEMORY OF YOUTH

THE moments passed as at a play,
I had the wisdom love brings forth ;
I had my share of mother wit
And yet for all that I could say,
And though I had her praise for it,
A cloud blown from the cut-throat
north
Suddenly hid love's moon away.

Believing every word I said
I praised her body and her mind
Till pride had made her eyes grow
bright,
And pleasure made her cheeks grow
red,
And vanity her footfall light,
Yet we, for all that praise, could find
Nothing but darkness overhead.

We sat as silent as a stone,
We knew, though she'd not said a
word,
That even the best of love must die,
And had been savagely undone
Were it not that love upon the cry
Of a most ridiculous little bird
Tore from the clouds his marvellous
moon.

FALLEN MAJESTY

ALTHOUGH crowds gathered once if
she but showed her face,
And even old men's eyes grew dim,
this hand alone,
Like some last courtier at a gypsy
camping place,
Babbling of fallen majesty, records
what's gone.

The lineaments, a heart that laughter
has made sweet,
These, these remain, but I record
what's gone. A crowd
Will gather, and not know it walks
the very street
Whereon a thing once walked that
seemed a burning cloud.

FRIENDS

Now must I these three praise—
Three women that have wrought
What joy is in my days ;
One that no passing thought,
Nor those unpassing cares,
No, not in these fifteen
Many times troubled years,
Could ever come between
Heart and delighted heart ;
And one because her hand
Had strength that could unbind
What none can understand,
What none can have and thrive,
Youth's dreamy load, till she
So changed me that I live
Labouring in ecstasy.

And what of her that took
All till my youth was gone
With scarce a pitying look ?
How should I praise that one ?
When day begins to break
I count my good and bad,
Being wakeful for her sake,
Remembering what she had,
What eagle look still shows,
While up from my heart's root
So great a sweetness flows
I shake from head to foot.

THE COLD HEAVEN

SUDDENLY I saw the cold and rook-
delighting Heaven
That seemed as though ice burned and
was but the more ice,
And thereupon imagination and heart
were driven
So wild that every casual thought
of that and this
Vanished, and left but memories, that
should be out of season
With the hot blood of youth, of love
crossed long ago ;
And I took all the blame out of all
sense and reason,
Until I cried and trembled and rocked
to and fro,
Riddled with light. Ah ! when the
ghost begins to quicken,

74 THE COLD HEAVEN

Confusion of the death-bed over, is it
sent

Out naked on the roads, as the books
say, and stricken

By the injustice of the skies for
punishment ?

THAT THE NIGHT COME

SHE lived in storm and strife,
Her soul had such desire
For what proud death may bring
That it could not endure
The common good of life,
But lived as 'twere a king
That packed his marriage day
With banneret and pennon,
Trumpet and kettledrum,
And the outrageous cannon,
To bundle time away
That the night come.

AN APPOINTMENT

BEING out of heart with government
I took a broken root to fling
Where the proud, wayward squirrel
went,
Taking delight that he could spring ;
And he, with that low whinnying
sound
That is like laughter, sprang again
And so to the other tree at a bound.
Nor the tame will, nor timid brain,
Nor heavy knitting of the brow
Bred that fierce tooth and cleanly
limb
And threw him up to laugh on the
bough ;
No government appointed him.

I

THE MAGI

Now as at all times I can see in the
mind's eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale
unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue
depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-
beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering
side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping
to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence un-
satisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the
bestial floor.

II

THE DOLLS

A DOLL in the doll-maker's house
Looks at the cradle and bawls :
' That is an insult to us.'
But the oldest of all the dolls
Who had seen, being kept for show,
Generations of his sort,
Out-screams the whole shelf : ' Al-
though
There's not a man can report
Evil of this place,
The man and the woman bring
Hither to our disgrace,
A noisy and filthy thing.'
Hearing him groan and stretch
The doll-maker's wife is aware

Her husband has heard the wretch,
And crouched by the arm of his chair,
She murmurs into his ear,
Head upon shoulder leant :
' My dear, my dear, oh dear,
It was an accident.'

A COAT

I MADE my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat ;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

*WHILE I, from that reed-throated
whisperer
Who comes at need, although not now
as once
A clear articulation in the air
But inwardly, surmise companions
Beyond the fling of the dull ass's hoof,
—Ben Jonson's phrase—and find when
June is come
At Kyle-na-no under that ancient roof
A sterner conscience and a friendlier
home,
I can forgive even that wrong of wrongs,
Those undreamt accidents that have
made me
—Seeing that Fame has perished this
long while
Being but a part of ancient ceremony—
Notorious, till all my priceless things
Are but a post the passing dogs defile.*

FROM THE GREEN HELMET
AND OTHER POEMS

HIS DREAM

I SWAYED upon the gaudy stern
The butt end of a steering oar,
And everywhere that I could turn
Men ran upon the shore.

And though I would have hushed the
 crowd,
There was no mother's son but said,
' What is the figure in a shroud
Upon a gaudy bed ? '

And fishes bubbling to the brim
Cried out upon that thing beneath,
—It had such dignity of limb—
By the sweet name of Death.

Though I'd my finger on my lip,
What could I but take up the song ?

And fish and crowd and gaudy ship
Cried out the whole night long,

Crying amid the glittering sea,
Naming it with ecstatic breath,
Because it had such dignity
By the sweet name of Death.

A WOMAN HOMER SUNG

IF any man drew near
When I was young,
I thought, 'He holds her dear,'
And shook with hate and fear.
But oh, 'twas bitter wrong
If he could pass her by
With an indifferent eye.

Whereon I wrote and wrought,
And now, being grey,
I dream that I have brought
To such a pitch my thought
That coming time can say,
'He shadowed in a glass
What thing her body was.'

For she had fiery blood
When I was young,

88 A WOMAN HOMER SUNG

And trod so sweetly proud
As 'twere upon a cloud,
A woman Homer sung,
That life and letters seem
But an heroic dream.

THE CONSOLATION

I HAD this thought awhile ago,
' My darling cannot understand
What I have done, or what would do
In this blind bitter land.'

And I grew weary of the sun
Until my thoughts cleared up again,
Remembering that the best I have
done
Was done to make it plain ;

That every year I have cried, ' At
length
My darling understands it all,
Because I have come into my strength,
And words obey my call.'

That had she done so who can say
What would have shaken from the
sieve ?

I might have thrown poor words away
And been content to live.

NO SECOND TROY

WHY should I blame her that she
filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most
violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the
great,
Had they but courage equal to desire ?
What could have made her peaceful
with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a
kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most
stern ?
Why, what could she have done being
what she is ?
Was there another Troy for her to
burn ?

RECONCILIATION

SOME may have blamed you that you
took away
The verses that could move them on
the day
When, the ears being deafened, the
sight of the eyes blind
With lightning you went from me,
and I could find
Nothing to make a song about but
kings,
Helmets, and swords, and half-for-
gotten things
That were like memories of you—but
now
We'll out, for the world lives as long
ago ;

And while we're in our laughing,
weeping fit,
Hurl helmets, crowns, and swords
into the pit.
But, dear, cling close to me; since
you were gone,
My barren thoughts have chilled me
to the bone.

KING AND NO KING

‘ WOULD it were anything but merely
voice ! ’

The No King cried who after that was
King,

Because he had not heard of anything
That balanced with a word is more
than noise ;

Yet Old Romance being kind, let him
prevail

Somewhere or somehow that I have
forgot,

Though he'd but cannon—Whereas
we that had thought

To have lit upon as clean and sweet
a tale

Have been defeated by that pledge
you gave

In momentary anger long ago ;
And I that have not your faith, how
shall I know
That in the blinding light beyond the
grave
We'll find so good a thing as that we
have lost ?
The hourly kindness, the day's com-
mon speech,
The habitual content of each with each
When neither soul nor body has been
crossed.

PEACE

Ан, that Time could touch a form
That could show what Homer's age
Bred to be a hero's wage.
' Were not all her life but storm,
Would not painters paint a form
Of such noble lines,' I said,
' Such a delicate high head,
All that sternness amid charm,
All that sweetness amid strength? '
Ah, but peace that comes at length,
Came when Time had touched her
form.

AGAINST UNWORTHY PRAISE

O HEART, be at peace, because
Nor knave nor dolt can break
What's not for their applause,
Being for a woman's sake.
Enough if the work has seemed,
So did she your strength renew,
A dream that a lion had dreamed
Till the wilderness cried aloud,
A secret between you two,
Between the proud and the proud.

What, still you would have their
praise !
But here's a haughtier text,
The labyrinth of her days
That her own strangeness perplexed ;

98 AGAINST UNWORTHY PRAISE

And hów what her dreaming gave
Earned slander, ingratitude,
From self-same dolt and knave ;
Aye, and worse wrong than these.
Yet she, singing upon her road,
Half lion, half child, is at peace.

THE FASCINATION OF WHAT'S DIFFICULT

THE fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins,
and rent
Spontaneous joy and natural content
Out of my heart. There's something
ails our colt
That must, as if it had not holy blood,
Nor on Olympus leaped from cloud
to cloud,
Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat
and jolt
As though it dragged road metal. My
curse on plays
That have to be set up in fifty ways,
On the day's war with every knave
and dolt,

100 WHAT'S DIFFICULT

Theatre business, management of men.
I swear before the dawn comes round
 again
I'll find the stable and pull out the
 bolt.

A DRINKING SONG

WINE comes in at the mouth
And love comes in at the eye ;
That's all we shall know for truth
Before we grow old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh.

THE COMING OF WISDOM WITH TIME

THOUGH leaves are many, the root is
one ;
Through all the lying days of my
youth
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the
sun ;
Now I may wither into the truth.

ON HEARING THAT THE STUDENTS
OF OUR NEW UNIVERSITY HAVE
JOINED THE ANCIENT ORDER OF
HIBERNIANS AND THE AGITATION
AGAINST IMMORAL LITERATURE

WHERE, where but here have Pride
and Truth,
That long to give themselves for wage,
To shake their wicked sides at youth
Restraining reckless middle-age.

TO A POET, WHO WOULD HAVE ME
PRAISE CERTAIN BAD POETS, IMI-
TATORS OF HIS AND MINE

You say, as I have often given tongue
In praise of what another's said or
 sung,
'Twere politic to do the like by these ;
But was there ever dog that praised
 his fleas ?

THE MASK

‘PUT off that mask of burning gold
With emerald eyes.’

‘O no, my dear, you make so bold
To find if hearts be wild and wise,
And yet not cold.’

‘I would but find what’s there to find,
Love or deceit.’

‘It was the mask engaged your mind,
And after set your heart to beat,
Not what’s behind.’

‘But lest you are my enemy,
I must enquire.’

‘O no, my dear, let all that be,
What matter, so there is but fire
In you, in me?’

UPON A HOUSE SHAKEN BY
THE LAND AGITATION

How should the world be luckier if
this house,
Where passion and precision have
been one
Time out of mind, became too ruinous
To breed the lidless eye that loves the
sun ?
And the sweet laughing eagle thoughts
that grow
Where wings have memory of wings,
and all
That comes of the best knit to the
best ? Although
Mean roof-trees were the sturdier for
its fall,
How should their luck run high enough
to reach

THE LAND AGITATION 107

The gifts that govern men, and after
these

To gradual Time's last gift, a written
speech

Wrought of high laughter, loveliness
and ease ?

AT THE ABBEY THEATRE

(Imitated from Ronsard)

DEAR Craoibhin Aoibhin, look into
our case.

When we are high and airy hundreds
say

That if we hold that flight they'll
leave the place,

While those same hundreds mock
another day

Because we have made our art of
common things,

So bitterly, you'd dream they longed
to look

All their lives through into some drift
of wings.

You've dandled them and fed them
from the book

And know them to the bone ; impart
to us—

We'll keep the secret—a new trick to
please.

Is there a bridle for this Proteus
That turns and changes like his
draughty seas ?

Or is there none, most popular of men,
But when they mock us that we mock
again ?

THESE ARE THE CLOUDS

THESE are the clouds about the fallen
sun,
The majesty that shuts his burning
eye ;
The weak lay hand on what the
strong has done,
Till that be tumbled that was lifted
high
And discord follow upon unison,
And all things at one common level lie.
And therefore, friend, if your great
race were run
And these things came, so much the
more thereby
Have you made greatness your com-
panion,

THESE ARE THE CLOUDS 111

Although it be for children that you
sigh :

These are the clouds about the fallen
sun,

The majesty that shuts his burning
eye.

AT GALWAY RACES

THERE where the course is,
Delight makes all of the one mind,
The riders upon the galloping horses,
The crowd that closes in behind :
We, too, had good attendance once,
Hearers and hearteners of the work ;
Aye, horsemen for companions,
Before the merchant and the clerk
Breathed on the world with timid
 breath.

SING on : sometime, and at some new
 moon,

We'll learn that sleeping is not death,
Hearing the whole earth change its
 tune,

Its flesh being wild, and it again
Crying aloud as the race course is,
And we find hearteners among men
That ride upon horses.

A FRIEND'S ILLNESS

SICKNESS brought me this
Thought, in that scale of his :
Why should I be dismayed
Though flame had burned the whole
World, as it were a coal,
Now I have seen it weighed
Against a soul ?

ALL THINGS CAN TEMPT ME

ALL things can tempt me from this
craft of verse :

One time it was a woman's face, or
worse—

The seeming needs of my fool-driven
land ;

Now nothing but comes readier to the
hand

Than this accustomed toil. When I
was young,

I had not given a penny for a song
Did not the poet sing it with such airs
That one believed he had a sword
upstairs ;

Yet would be now, could I but have
my wish,

Colder and dumber and deafer than
a fish.

THE YOUNG MAN'S SONG

I WHISPERED, ' I am too young,'
And then, ' I am old enough ' ;
Wherefore I threw a penny
To find out if I might love.
' Go and love, go and love, young
man,
If the lady be young and fair.'
Ah, penny, brown penny, brown
penny,
I am looped in the loops of her hair.

Oh, love is the crooked thing,
There is nobody wise enough
To find out all that is in it,
For he would be thinking of love
Till the stars had run away,

116 THE YOUNG MAN'S SONG

And the shadows eaten the moon.

Ah, penny, brown penny, brown
penny,

One cannot begin it too soon.

THE HOUR-GLASS

NEW VERSION—1912

THE HOUR-GLASS

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

WISE MAN.

BRIDGET, his wife.

TEIGUE, a fool.

ANGEL.

Children and Pupils.

Pupils come in and stand before the stage curtain, which is still closed. One pupil carries a book.

FIRST PUPIL

He said we might choose the subject for the lesson.

SECOND PUPIL

There is none of us wise enough to do that.

THIRD PUPIL

It would need a great deal of wisdom to know what it is we want to know.

FOURTH PUPIL

I will question him.

FIFTH PUPIL

You ?

FOURTH PUPIL

Last night I dreamt that some one came and told me to question him. I was to say to him, 'You were wrong to say there is no God and no soul—maybe, if there is not much of either, there is yet some tatters, some tag on the wind—so to speak—some rag upon a bush, some bob-tail of a god.' I will argue with him,—nonsense though it be—according to my dream, and you will see how well I can argue, and what thoughts I have.

FIRST PUPIL

I'd as soon listen to dried peas in
a bladder, as listen to your thoughts.
[*Fool comes in.*]

FOOL

Give me a penny.

SECOND PUPIL

Let us choose a subject by chance.
Here is his big book. Let us turn
over the pages slowly. Let one of us
put down his finger without looking.
The passage his finger lights on will
be the subject for the lesson.

FOOL

Give me a penny.

THIRD PUPIL

(*Taking up book*) How heavy it
is.

FOURTH PUPIL

Spread it on Teigue's back, and then we can all stand round and see the choice.

SECOND PUPIL

Make him spread out his arms.

FOURTH PUPIL

Down on your knees. Hunch up your back. Spread your arms out now, and look like a golden eagle in a church. Keep still, Keep still.

FOOL

Give me a penny.

THIRD PUPIL

Is that the right cry for an eagle cock ?

SECOND PUPIL

I'll turn the pages—you close your eyes and put your finger down.

THIRD PUPIL

That's it, and then he cannot blame us for the choice.

FIRST PUPIL

There, I have chosen. Fool, keep still—and if what's wise is strange and sounds like nonsense, we've made a good choice.

FIFTH PUPIL

The Master has come.

FOOL

Will anybody give a penny to a fool ?

[One of the pupils draws back the stage curtain showing the Master sitting at his desk. There is an hour-glass upon his desk or in a bracket on the wall. One pupil puts the book before him]

FIRST PUPIL

We have chosen the passage for the lesson, Master. 'There are two

living countries, one visible and one invisible, and when it is summer there, it is winter here, and when it is November with us, it is lambing-time there.'

WISE MAN

That passage, that passage! what mischief has there been since yesterday?

FIRST PUPIL

None, Master.

WISE MAN

Oh yes, there has; some craziness has fallen from the wind, or risen from the graves of old men, and made you choose that subject.

FOURTH PUPIL

I knew that it was folly, but they would have it.

THIRD PUPIL

Had we not better say we picked it by chance ?

SECOND PUPIL

No; he would say we were children still.

FIRST PUPIL

I have found a sentence under that one that says—as though to show it had a hidden meaning—a beggar wrote it upon the walls of Babylon.

WISE MAN

Then find some beggar and ask him what it means, for I will have nothing to do with it.

FOURTH PUPIL

Come, Teigue, what is the old book's meaning when it says that there are sheep that drop their lambs in November ?

FOOL

To be sure—everybody knows, everybody in the world knows, when it is Spring with us, the trees are withering there, when it is Summer with us, the snow is falling there, and have I not myself heard the lambs that are there all bleating on a cold November day—to be sure, does not everybody with an intellect know that; and maybe when it's night with us, it is day with them, for many a time I have seen the roads lighted before me.

WISE MAN

The beggar who wrote that on Babylon wall meant that there is a spiritual kingdom that cannot be seen or known till the faculties whereby we master the kingdom of this world wither away, like green things in winter. A monkish thought, the

most mischievous thought that ever passed out of a man's mouth.

FIRST PUPIL

If he meant all that, I will take an oath that he was spindle-shanked, and cross-eyed, and had a lousy itching shoulder, and that his heart was crosser than his eyes, and that he wrote it out of malice.

SECOND PUPIL

Let's come away and find a better subject.

FOURTH PUPIL

And maybe now you'll let me choose.

FIRST PUPIL

Come.

WISE MAN

Were it but true 'twould alter every-
thing
Until the stream of the world had
changed its course,

128 THE HOUR-GLASS

And that and all our thoughts had run
Into some cloudy thunderous spring
They dream to be its source—
Aye, to some frenzy of the mind ;
And all that we have done would be
 undone,
Our speculation but as the wind.

[A pause.

I have dreamed it twice.

FIRST PUPIL

Something has troubled him.

[Pupils go out.

WISE MAN

Twice have I dreamed it in a morning
 dream,
Now nothing serves my pupils but to
 come
With a like thought. Reason is grow-
 ing dim ;
A moment more and Frenzy will beat
 his drum

And laugh aloud and scream ;
 And I must dance in the dream.
 No, no, but it is like a hawk, a hawk of
 the air,
 It has swooped down—and this swoop
 makes the third—
 And what can I, but tremble like a
 bird ?

FOOL

Give me a penny.

WISE MAN

That I should dream it twice, and
 after that, that they should pick it out.

FOOL

Won't you give me a penny ?

WISE MAN

What do you want ? What can it
 matter to you whether the words I
 am reading are wisdom or sheer folly ?

FOOL

Such a great, wise teacher will not refuse a penny to a fool.

WISE MAN

Seeing that everybody is a fool when he is asleep and dreaming, why do you call me wise ?

FOOL

O, I know,—I know, I know what I have seen.

WISE MAN

Well, to see rightly is the whole of wisdom, whatever dream be with us.

FOOL

When I went by Kilcluan, where the bells used to be ringing at the break of every day, I could hear nothing but the people snoring in their houses. When I went by Tubber-

vanach, where the young men used to be climbing the hill to the blessed well, they were sitting at the cross-roads playing cards. When I went by Carrigoras, where the friars used to be fasting and serving the poor, I saw them drinking wine and obeying their wives. And when I asked what misfortune had brought all these changes, they said it was no misfortune, but that it was the wisdom they had learned from your teaching.

WISE MAN

And you too have called me wise—you would be paid for that good opinion doubtless—Run to the kitchen, my wife will give you food and drink.

FOOL

That's foolish advice for a wise man to give.

WISE MAN

Why, Fool ?

FOOL

What is eaten is gone—I want pennies for my bag. I must buy bacon in the shops, and nuts in the market, and strong drink for the time the sun is weak, and snares to catch the rabbits and the hares, and a big pot to cook them in.

WISE MAN

I have more to think about than giving pennies to your like, so run away.

FOOL

Give me a penny and I will bring you luck. The fishermen let me sleep among their nets in the loft because I bring them luck ; and in the summer time, the wild creatures let me sleep near their nests and their holes. It

is lucky even to look at me, but it is much more lucky to give me a penny. If I was not lucky I would starve.

WISE MAN

What are the shears for ?

FOOL

I won't tell you. If I told you, you would drive them away.

WISE MAN

Drive them away! Who would I drive away ?

FOOL

I won't tell you.

WISE MAN

Not if I give you a penny ?

FOOL

No.

WISE MAN

Not if I give you two pennies ?

FOOL

You will be very lucky if you give me two pennies, but I won't tell you.

WISE MAN

Three pennies ?

FOOL

Four, and I will tell you.

WISE MAN

Very well—four, but from this out I will not call you Teigue the Fool.

FOOL

Let me come close to you, where nobody will hear me; but first you must promise not to drive them away. (*Wise Man nods.*) Every day men go out dressed in black and spread great black nets over the hills, great black nets.

WISE MAN

A strange place that to fish in.

FOOL

They spread them out on the hills that they may catch the feet of the angels ; but every morning just before the dawn, I go out and cut the nets with the shears and the angels fly away.

WISE MAN

(*Speaking with excitement*) Ah, now I know that you are Teigue the Fool. You say that I am wise, and yet I say, there are no angels.

FOOL

I have seen plenty of angels.

WISE MAN

No, no, you have not.

FOOL

They are plenty if you but look about you. They are like the blades of grass.

WISE MAN

They are plenty as the blades of grass—I heard that phrase when I was but a child and was told folly.

FOOL

When one gets quiet. When one is so quiet that there is not a thought in one's head maybe, there is something that wakes up inside one, something happy and quiet, and then all in a minute one can smell summer flowers, and tall people go by, happy and laughing, but they will not let us look at their faces. Oh no, it is not right that we should look at their faces.

WISE MAN

You have fallen asleep upon a hill,
yet, even those that used to dream of
angels dream now of other things.

FOOL

I saw one but a moment ago—
that is because I am lucky. It was
coming behind me, but it was not
laughing.

WISE MAN

There's nothing but what men can
see when they are awake. Nothing,
nothing.

FOOL

I knew you would drive them away.

WISE MAN

Pardon me, Fool,
I had forgotten whom I spoke to.
Well, there are your four pennies—
Fool you are called,

138 THE HOUR-GLASS

And all day long they cry, 'Come
hither, Fool.'

[The Fool goes close to him.

Or else it's, 'Fool, be gone.'

[The Fool goes further off.

Or, 'Fool, stand there.'

[The Fool straightens himself up.

Or, 'Fool, go sit in the corner.'

[The Fool sits in the corner.

And all the while

What were they all but fools before I
came?

What are they now, but mirrors that
seem men,

Because of my image? Fool, hold up
your head. *[Fool does so.*

What foolish stories they have told of
the ghosts

That fumbled with the clothes upon
the bed,

Or creaked and shuffled in the corridor,
Or else, if they were pious bred,

Of angels from the skies,

That coming through the door,
 Or, it maybe, standing there,
 Would solidly out stare
 The steadiest eyes with their un-
 natural eyes,
 Aye, on a man's own floor.

*[An angel has come in. It should
 be played by a man if a man
 can be found with the right
 voice, and may wear a little
 golden domino and a halo made
 of metal. Or the whole face
 may be a beautiful mask, in
 which case the last sentence on
 page 136 should not be spoken.]*

Yet it is strange, the strangest thing
 I have known,
 That I should still be haunted by the
 notion
 That there's a crisis of the spirit
 wherein
 We get new sight, and that they know
 some trick

To turn our thoughts for their own
ends to frenzy.

Why do you put your finger to your lip,
And creep away ? [*Fool goes out.*

(*Wise Man sees Angel.*) What are
you ? Who are you ?

I think I saw some like you in my
dreams,

When but a child. That thing about
your head,—

That brightness in your hair—that
flowery branch ;

But I have done with dreams, I have
done with dreams.

ANGEL

I am the crafty one that you have
called.

WISE MAN

How that I called ?

ANGEL

I am the messenger.

WISE MAN

What message could you bring to one
like me ?

ANGEL (*turning the hour-glass*)

That you will die when the last grain
of sand
Has fallen through this glass.

WISE MAN

I have a wife,
Children and pupils that I cannot
leave :
Why must I die, my time is far away ?

ANGEL

You have to die because no soul has
passed
The heavenly threshold since you have
opened school,
But grass grows there, and rust upon
the hinge ;

And they are, lonely that must keep
the watch.

WISE MAN

And whither shall I go when I am
dead ?

ANGEL

You have denied there is a purgatory,
Therefore that gate is closed ; you
have denied
There is a heaven, and so that gate is
closed.

WISE MAN

Where then ? For I have said there
is no hell.

ANGEL

Hell is the place of those who have
denied ;
They find there what they planted and
what dug,

A Lake of Spaces, and a Wood of
Nothing,
And wander there and drift, and never
cease
Wailing for substance.

WISE MAN

Pardon me, blessed Angel,
I have denied and taught the like to
others.
But how could I believe before my
sight
Had come to me ?

ANGEL

It is too late for pardon.

WISE MAN

Had I but met your gaze as now I
met it—
But how can you that live but where
we go
In the uncertainty of dizzy dreams

Know why we doubt? Parting, sick-
ness and death,
The rotting of the grass, tempest and
drouth,
These are the messengers that came
to me.

Why are you silent? You carry in
your hands
God's pardon, and you will not give it
me.

Why are you silent? Were I not
afraid,
I'd kiss your hands—no, no, the hem
of your dress.

ANGEL

Only when all the world has testified,
May soul confound it, crying out in joy,
And laughing on its lonely precipice,
What's dearth and death and sickness
to the soul
That knows no virtue but itself? Nor
could it,

So trembling with delight and mother-
naked,
Live unabashed if the arguing world
stood by.

WISE MAN

It is as hard for you to understand
Why we have doubted, as it is for us
To banish doubt—what folly have I
said ?
There can be nothing that you do not
know :
Give me a year—a month—a week—
a day,
I would undo what I have done—an
hour—
Give me until the sand has run in the
glass.

ANGEL

Though you may not undo what you
have done,
I have this power—if you but find one
soul,

Before the sands have fallen, that still
 believes,
 One fish to lie and spawn among the
 stones
 Till the great fisher's net is full again,
 You may, the purgatorial fire being
 passed,
 Spring to your peace.

[Pupils sing in the distance.

' Who stole your wits away
 And where are they gone ? '

WISE MAN

My pupils come,
 Before you have begun to climb the
 sky
 I shall have found that soul. They
 say they doubt,
 But what their mothers dinned into
 their ears
 Cannot have been so lightly rooted up ;
 Besides, I can disprove what I once
 proved—

And yet give me some thought, some
argument,
More mighty than my own.

ANGEL

Farewell—farewell,
For I am weary of the weight of time.

*[Angel goes out. Wise Man makes
a step to follow and pauses.
Some of his pupils come
in at the other side of the
stage.]*

FIRST PUPIL

Master, master, you must choose the
subject.

*[Enter other pupils with Fool,
{ about whom they dance; all
the pupils may have little
cushions on which presently
they seat themselves.]*

SECOND PUPIL

Here is a subject—where have the
Fool's wits gone? (*singing*)
' Who dragged your wits away
Where no one knows?
Or have they run off
On their own pair of shoes? '

FOOL

Give me a penny.

FIRST PUPIL

The Master will find your wits,

SECOND PUPIL

And when they are found, you must
not beg for pennies.

THIRD PUPIL

They are hidden somewhere in the
badger's hole,
But you must carry an old candle end
If you would find them.

FOURTH PUPIL

They are up above the clouds.

FOOL

Give me a penny, give me a penny.

FIRST PUPIL (*singing*)

'I'll find your wits again,
Come, for I saw them roll,
To where old badger mumbles
In the black hole.'

SECOND PUPIL (*singing*)

'No, but an angel stole them
The night that you were born,
And now they are but a rag,
On the moon's horn.'

WISE MAN

Be silent.

FIRST PUPIL

Can you not see that he is troubled?

[*All the pupils are seated.*]

WISE MAN

What do you think of when alone at
night ?

Do not the things your mothers spoke
about,

Before they took the candle from the
bedside,

Rush up into the mind and master it,
Till you believe in them against your
will ?

SECOND PUPIL (*to first pupil*)

You answer for us.

THIRD PUPIL (*in a whisper to first
pupil*)

Be careful what you say ;
If he persuades you to an argument,
He will but turn us all to mockery.

FIRST PUPIL

We had no minds until you made them
for us ;

Our bodies only were our mother's
work.

WISE MAN

You answer with incredible things.

It is certain

That there is one,—though it may be
but one—

Believes in God and in some heaven
and hell—

In all those things we put into our
prayers.

FIRST PUPIL

We thought those things before our
minds were born,

But that was long ago—we are not
children.

WISE MAN

You are afraid to tell me what you
think

Because I am hot and angry when I
am crossed.

I do not blame you for it; but have
no fear,

152 THE HOUR-GLASS

For if there's one that sat on smiling
 there,
As though my arguments were sweet
 as milk
Yet found them bitter, I will thank
 him for it,
If he but speak his mind.

FIRST PUPIL

 There is no one, Master,
There is not one but found them sweet
 as milk.

WISE MAN

The things that have been told us in
 our childhood
Are not so fragile.

SECOND PUPIL

We are no longer children.

THIRD PUPIL

We all believe in you and in what you
 have taught.

OTHER PUPILS

All, all, all, all, in you, nothing but
you.

WISE MAN

I have deceived you—where shall I go
for words—

I have no thoughts—my mind has
been swept bare.

The messengers that stand in the fiery
cloud,

Fling themselves out, if we but dare
to question,

And after that, the Babylonian moon
Blots all away.

FIRST PUPIL (*to other pupils*)

I take his words to mean
That visionaries, and martyrs when
they are raised

Above translunary things, and there
enlightened,

As it were a polished mirror that re-
flects

An unchanged world ; and not when
the steel melts,

Bubbling and hissing, till there's
naught but fume.

WISE MAN

When it is melted, when it all fumes up,
They walk, as when beside those three
in the furnace

The form of the fourth.

FIRST PUPIL

Master, there's none among us
That has not heard your mockery of
these,

Or thoughts like these, and we have
not forgot.

WISE MAN

Something incredible has happened—
some one has come

Suddenly like a grey hawk out of the
air,
And all that I declared untrue is
true.

FIRST PUPIL (*to other pupils*)

You'd think the way he says it, that
he felt it.
There's not a mummer to compare
with him.
He's something like a man.

SECOND PUPIL

Give us some proof.

WISE MAN

What proof have I to give, but that
an angel
An instant ago was standing on that
spot. [*The pupils rise.*]

THIRD PUPIL

You dreamed it.

WISE MAN

I was awake as I am now.

FIRST PUPIL (*to the others*)

I may be dreaming now for all I
know.

He wants to show we have no certain
proof

Of anything in the world.

SECOND PUPIL

There is this proof
That shows we are awake—we have all
one world

While every dreamer has a world of
his own,

And sees what no one else can.

THIRD PUPIL

Teigue sees angels.
So when the Master says he has seen
an angel,

He may have seen one.

FIRST PUPIL

Both may still be dreamers ;
Unless it's proved the angels were
alike.

SECOND PUPIL

What sort are the angels, Teigue ?

THIRD PUPIL

That will prove nothing,
Unless we are sure prolonged obedience
Has made one angel like another angel
As they were eggs.

FIRST PUPIL

The Master's silent now :
For he has found that to dispute with
us—
Seeing that he has taught us what we
know—
Is but to reason with himself. Let us
away,
And find if there is one believer left.

WISE MAN

Yes, yes. Find me but one that still
believes
The things that we were told when
we were children.

THIRD PUPIL

He'll mock and maul him.

FOURTH PUPIL

From the first I knew
He wanted somebody to argue with.
[They go.]

WISE MAN

I have no reason left. All dark, all
dark!
*[Pupils return laughing. They
push forward fourth pupil.]*

FIRST PUPIL

Here, Master, is the very man you
want.

160 THE HOUR-GLASS

He said, when we were studying the
 book,
That maybe after all the monks were
 right,
And you mistaken, and if we but gave
 him time,
He'd prove that it was so.

FOURTH PUPIL

I never said it.

WISE MAN

Dear friend, dear friend, do you be-
 lieve in God ?

FOURTH PUPIL

Master, they have invented this to
 mock me.

WISE MAN

You are afraid of me.

FOURTH PUPIL

They know well, Master,
 That all I said was but to make them
 argue.
 They've pushed me in to make a mock
 of me,
 Because they knew I could take either
 side
 And beat them at it.

WISE MAN

If you believe in God,
 You are my soul's one friend.

[Pupils laugh.

Mistress or wife
 Can give us but our good or evil luck
 Amid the howling world, but you shall
 give
 Eternity, and those sweet-throated
 things
 That drift above the moon.

*[The pupils look at one another
 and are silent.*

SECOND PUPIL

How strange he is.

WISE MAN

The angel that stood there upon that
spot,
Said that my soul was lost unless I
found
One that believed.

FOURTH PUPIL

Cease mocking at me, Master,
For I am certain that there is no God
Nor immortality, and they that said it
Made a fantastic tale from a starved
dream
To plague our hearts. Will that con-
tent you, Master ?

WISE MAN

The giddy glass is emptier every
moment,
And you stand there, debating, laugh-
ing and wrangling.

Out of my sight ! Out of my sight, I
say. *[He drives them out.*

I'll call my wife, for what can women
do,

That carry us in the darkness of their
bodies,

But mock the reason that lets nothing
grow

Unless it grow in light. Bridget,
Bridget.

A woman never ceases to believe,
Say what we will. Bridget, come
quickly, Bridget.

*[Bridget comes in wearing her
apron. Her sleeves turned up
from her arms which are
covered with flour.*

Wife, what do you believe in ? Tell
me the truth,

And not—as is the habit with you
all—

Something you think will please me.
Do you pray ?

Sometimes when you're alone in the
house, do you pray ?

BRIDGET

Prayers—no, you taught me to
leave them off long ago. At first I
was sorry, but I am glad now, for I
am sleepy in the evenings.

WISE MAN

Do you believe in God ?

BRIDGET

Oh, a good wife only believes in
what her husband tells her.

WISE MAN

But sometimes, when the children are
asleep
And I am in the school, do you not
think
About the Martyrs and the saints and
the angels,

And all the things that you believed
in once ?

BRIDGET

I think about nothing—sometimes
I wonder if the linen is bleaching
white, or I go out to see if the crows
are picking up the chicken's food.

WISE MAN

My God,—my God ! I will go out
myself.

My pupils said that they would find a
man

Whose faith I never shook—they may
have found him.

Therefore I will go out—but if I go,
The glass will let the sands run out
unseen.

I cannot go—I cannot leave the glass.
Go call my pupils—I can explain all
now,

Only when all our hold on life is
troubled,

Only in spiritual terror can the Truth
Come through the broken mind—as
the pease burst

Out of a broken pease-cod.

[He clutches Bridget as she is going.]

Say to them,
That Nature would lack all in her
most need,

Could not the soul find truth as in a
flash,

Upon the battle-field, or in the midst
Of overwhelming waves, and say to
them—

But no, they would but answer as I bid.

BRIDGET

You want 'somebody to get up an
argument with.

WISE MAN

Look out and see if there is any one
There in the street—I cannot leave the
glass,

For somebody might shake it, and the
sand
If it were shaken might run down on
the instant.

BRIDGET

I don't understand a word you are
saying. There's a crowd of people
talking to your pupils.

WISE MAN

Go out and find if they have found a
man
Who did not understand me when I
taught,
Or did not listen.

BRIDGET

It is a hard thing to be married to
a man of learning that must always be
having arguments. [*She goes out.*]

WISE MAN

Strange that I should be blind to the
great secret,
And that so simple a man might write
it out
Upon a blade of grass with the juice
of a berry ;
And laugh and cry, because it was so
simple.

[Enter Bridget followed by the Fool.]

FOOL

Give me something ; give me a
penny to buy bacon in the shops and
nuts in the market, and strong drink
for the time when the sun is weak.

BRIDGET

I have no pennies. *(To Wise Man)*
Your pupils cannot find anybody to
argue with you. There's nobody in

the whole country with belief enough for a lover's oath. Can't you be quiet now, and not always wanting to have arguments. It must be terrible to have a mind like that.

WISE MAN

Then I am lost indeed.

BRIDGET

Leave me alone now, I have to make the bread for you and the children. [*She goes into kitchen.*]

WISE MAN

Children, children !

BRIDGET

Your father wants you, run to him.
[*Children run in.*]

WISE MAN

Come to me, children. Do not be afraid.

170 THE HOUR-GLASS

I want to know if you believe in
Heaven,

God or the soul—no, do not tell me
yet;

You need not be afraid I shall be
angry,

Say what you please—so that it is
your thought—

I wanted you to know before you
spoke,

That I shall not be angry.

FIRST CHILD

We have not forgotten, Father.

SECOND CHILD

Oh no, Father.

BOTH CHILDREN

(As if repeating a lesson) There is
nothing we cannot see, nothing we
cannot touch.

FIRST CHILD

Foolish people used to say that there was, but you have taught us better.

WISE MAN

Go to your mother, go—yet do not go.
What can she say? If am dumb you
are lost;
And yet, because the sands are running out,
I have but a moment to show it all
in. Children,
The sap would die out of the blades of
grass
Had they a doubt. They understand
it all,
Being the fingers of God's certainty,
Yet can but make their sign into the
air;
But could they find their tongues
they'd show it all;
But what am I to say that am but one,

When they are millions and they will
not speak—

[*Children have run out.*

But they are gone ; what made them
run away ?

[*The Fool comes in with a dan-
delion.*

Look at me, tell me if my face is
changed,

Is there a notch of the fiend's nail
upon it

Already ? Is it terrible to sight ?

Because the moment's near.

[*Going to glass.*

I dare not look,

I dare not know the moment when
they come.

No, no, I dare not. (*Covers glass.*)

Will there be a footfall,

Or will there be a sort of rending
sound,

Or else a cracking, as though an iron
claw

Had gripped the threshold stone ?

[Fool has begun to blow the dandelion.]

What are you doing ?

FOOL

Wait a minute—four—five—six—

WISE MAN

What are you doing that for ?

FOOL

I am blowing the dandelion to find out what hour it is.

WISE MAN

You have heard everything, and that is why

You'd find what hour it is—you'd find that out,

That you may look upon a fleet of devils

Dragging my soul away. You shall not stop,

I will have no one here when they
come in,

I will have no one sitting there—no
one—

And yet—and yet—there is some-
thing strange about you.

I half remember something. What
is it?

Do you believe in God and in the soul?

FOOL

So you ask me now. I thought
when you were asking your pupils,
'Will he ask Teigue the Fool? Yes,
he will, he will; no, he will not—yes,
he will.' But Teigue will say nothing.
Teigue will say nothing.

WISE MAN

Tell me quickly.

FOOL

I said, 'Teigue knows everything,

not even the green-eyed cats and the hares that milk the cows have Teigue's wisdom'; but Teigue will not speak, he says nothing.

/ WISE MAN

Speak, speak, for underneath the cover
 there
 The sand is running from the upper
 glass,
 And when the last grain's through, I
 shall be lost.

FOOL

I will not speak. I will not tell you what is in my mind. I will not tell you what is in my bag. You might steal away my thoughts. I met a bodach on the road yesterday, and he said, 'Teigue, tell me how many pennies are in your bag; I will wager three pennies that there are

not twenty pennies in your bag ; let me put in my hand and count them.' But I gripped the bag the tighter, and when I go to sleep at night I hide the bag where nobody knows.

WISE MAN

There's but one pinch of sand, and I
am lost
If you are not he I seek.

FOOL

O, what a lot the Fool knows, but
he says nothing.

WISE MAN

Yes, I remember now. You spoke of
angels.
You said but now that you had seen
an angel.
You are the one I seek, and I am saved.

FOOL

Oh no. How could poor Teigue see angels? Oh, Teigue tells one tale here, another there, and everybody gives him pennies. If Teigue had not his tales he would starve.

[He breaks away and goes out.]

WISE MAN

The last hope is gone,
And now that it's too late I see it all,
We perish into God and sink away
Into reality—the rest's a dream.

[The Fool comes back.]

FOOL

There was one there—there by the threshold stone, waiting there; and he said, 'Go in, Teigue, and tell him everything that he asks you. He will give you a penny if you tell him.'

WISE MAN

I know enough, that know God's will
prevails.

FOOL

Waiting till the moment had come
—That is what the one out there was
saying, but I might tell you what you
asked. That is what he was saying.

WISE MAN

Be silent. May God's will prevail on
the instant,
Although His will be my eternal pain.
I have no question :
It is enough, I know what fixed the
station
Of star and cloud.
And knowing all, I cry
That what so God has willed
On the instant be fulfilled,
Though that be my damnation.

The stream of the world has changed
 its course,
 And with the stream my thoughts
 have run
 Into some cloudy thunderous spring
 That is its mountain source—
 Aye, to some frenzy of the mind,
 For all that we have done's undone,
 Our speculation but as the wind.

[He dies.]

FOOL

Wise man—Wise man, wake up
 and I will tell you everything for a
 penny. It is I, poor Teigue the Fool.
 Why don't you wake up, and say,
 'There is a penny for you, Teigue'?
 No, no, you will say nothing. You
 and I, we are the two fools, we know
 everything, but we will not speak.

[Angel enters holding a casket.]

O, look what has come from his
 mouth! O, look what has come from
 his mouth—the white butterfly! He

is dead, and I have taken his soul in my hands ; but I know why you open the lid of that golden box. I must give it to you. There then, (*he puts butterfly in casket*) he has gone through his pains, and you will open the lid in the Garden of Paradise. (*He closes curtain and remains outside it.*) He is gone, he is gone, he is gone, but come in everybody in the world and look at me.

‘ I hear the wind a blow

I hear the grass a grow,

And all that I know, I know.’

But I will not speak, I will run away.

[*He goes out.*

NOTES

NOTES

PREFATORY POEM

'FREE of the ten and four' is an error I cannot now correct, without more rewriting than I have a mind for. Some merchant in Villon, I forget the reference, was 'free of the ten and four.' Irish merchants exempted from certain duties by the Irish Parliament were, unless memory deceives me again for I am writing away from books, 'free of the eight and six.'

POEMS BEGINNING WITH THAT 'TO A WEALTHY
MAN' AND ENDING WITH THAT 'TO A
SHADE'

During the thirty years or so during which I have been reading Irish newspapers, three public controversies have stirred my imagination. The first was the Parnell controversy. There were reasons to justify a man's joining either party, but there were none to justify, on one side or on the other, lying accusations forgetful of past service, a frenzy of detraction. And another was the dispute over 'The

Playboy.' There were reasons for opposing as for supporting that violent, laughing thing, but none for the lies, for the unscrupulous rhetoric spread against it in Ireland, and from Ireland to America. The third prepared for the Corporation's refusal of a building for Sir Hugh Lane's famous collection of pictures. . . .

[I leave out two long paragraphs which have been published in earlier editions of this book. There is no need now to defend Sir Hugh Lane's pictures against Dublin newspapers. The trustees of the London National Gallery, through his leaving a codicil to his will unwittingly, have claimed the pictures for London, and propose to build a wing to the Tate Gallery to contain them. Some that were hostile are now contrite, and doing what they can, or letting others do unhindered what they can, to persuade Parliament to such action as may restore the collection to Ireland.—Jan. 1917.]

These controversies, political, literary, and artistic, have showed that neither religion nor politics can of itself create minds with enough receptivity to become wise, or just and generous enough to make a nation. Other cities have been as stupid—Samuel Butler laughs at shocked Montreal for hiding the Discobolus in a cellar—but Dublin is the capital of a nation, and an ancient race has nowhere else

to look for an education. Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister* describes a saintly and naturally gracious woman, who getting into a quarrel over some trumpery detail of religious observance, grows—she and all her little religious community—angry and vindictive. In Ireland I am constantly reminded of that fable of the futility of all discipline that is not of the whole being. Religious Ireland—and the pious Protestants of my childhood were signal examples—thinks of divine things as a round of duties separated from life and not as an element that may be discovered in all circumstance and emotion, while political Ireland sees the good citizen but as a man who holds to certain opinions and not as a man of good will. Against all this we have but a few educated men and the remnants of an old traditional culture among the poor. Both were stronger forty years ago, before the rise of our new middle class which showed as its first public event, during the nine years of the Parnellite split, how base at moments of excitement are minds without culture. 1914.

‘Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone’ sounds old-fashioned now. It seemed true in 1913, but I did not foresee 1916. The late Dublin Rebellion, whatever one can say of its wisdom, will long be remembered for its heroism. ‘They weighed so lightly what they gave,’ and gave

too in some cases without hope of success.
July 1916.

THE DOLLS

The fable for this poem came into my head while I was giving some lectures in Dublin. I had noticed once again how all thought among us is frozen into 'something other than human life.' After I had made the poem, I looked up one day into the blue of the sky, and suddenly imagined, as if lost in the blue of the sky, stiff figures in procession. I remembered that they were the habitual image suggested by blue sky, and looking for a second fable called them 'The Magi,' complementary forms to those enraged dolls.

THE HOUR-GLASS

A friend suggested to me the subject of this play, an Irish folk-tale from Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends*. I have for years struggled with something which is charming in the naive legend but a platitude on the stage. I did not discover till a year ago that if the wise man humbled himself to the fool and received salvation as his reward, so much more powerful are pictures than words, no explanatory dialogue could set the matter right. I was faintly pleased when I converted a music-hall singer and kept him going to Mass for six

weeks, so little responsibility does one feel for those to whom one has never been introduced ; but I was always ashamed when I saw any friend of my own in the theatre. Now I have made my philosopher accept God's will, whatever it is, and find his courage again, and helped by the elaboration of verse, have so changed the fable that it is not false to my own thoughts of the world.

THE END

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